

## The sole Tasmanian record of the Elbow Orchid *Thynninorchis huntianus* (F. Muell.) D.L. Jones & M.A. Clem.

The Elbow Orchid *Thynninorchis huntianus* (F. Muell.) D.L. Jones & M.A. Clem. was collected from a small scrub remnant in Smith's Gully on Flinders Island on 3 January 1972. The site and associated species are detailed below. The area has since been cleared. The specimen remains the sole Tasmanian record to date.

### The Site and Discovery

Smith's Gully is the main north-eastern valley of the granite Strzelecki massif in the south-western corner of Flinders Island. Most of the valley's floor, and the level ground to the boundary north of it, were cleared before the late 1960s. Dimmock (1957) mapped the area as falling within the Loccota Soil Type. He summarised this as 'Various angular grits and other soils on granite detritus.' However, he gave no detail about the Smith's Gully area, and confined his comments to the strip along the western, south-western and southern bases of the Strzelecki massif, which he assessed as the major occurrence of Loccota soil.

The Smith's Gully farm includes all the valley and extends a little way to the north. By 1972 there were two cottages just south of the farm's northern boundary and a small scrub remnant had been left beside the western one. The taller part had Manuka *Leptospermum scoparium* and the Tasmanian endemic Whip-stick Teatree *Leptospermum glaucescens* as the dominant shrubs. Their understorey, which ranged in height from 45 to 60 cm, was Common Heath *Epacris impressa*, Rock Teatree *Kunzea ambigua*, South-eastern Broom-heath *Monotoca glauca* and Golden Pea *Aotus ericoides*. The herbs that could be named were the Forked Combfern *Schizaea bifida*, Errienellum *Drosera peltata* var. *auriculata* and the Purple Beard-orchid *Calochilus robertsonii*. The other orchids were too over-developed to be determined but were a sun-orchid *Thelymitra* sp., a *Caladenia* and a Leek-orchid *Prasophyllum* sp..

At the narrow gap between this area and shorter growth was a single plant of an orchid novel to Maureen Christie and me. At a glance it looked like a dead sundew *Drosera* sp. It brought the name *Spiculea* to mind for one of us and, at home, it turned out – using Nicholls (1969) – to be the Elbow Orchid *Spiculea huntiana*.

Later, Mr Eric Warren, the owner of the property, told me that he thought the former eucalypts of the site were probably White Gums *Eucalyptus viminalis*. However, this seemed to be based on the eucalypts elsewhere on the block rather than actual observation at the site. I inspected the locality on 25 February 2006. The scrub remnant starting about 30 metres west of the site has Shining Peppermint *Eucalyptus nitida* dominant over old and decaying Whip-stick Teatree. The same eucalypt is the only dominant in an old scrub patch just north-west in the adjacent property. It is also the only eucalypt in the major remnant of bush starting about 200 metres west of the site. It is also the nearest dominant to the south. However, there is a small group of White Gums at about 150 metres south-west of the site.

### Later Searches and Status

When I checked the site in the mid-1970s there was no trace of the orchid. Mr Wayne Warren, a resident of Smiths Gully, searched the surviving scrub patches during the following season but his search was fruitless too (Wayne Warren, pers. comm.).

Since 1972, my collecting has continued on Flinders Island and 99 other islands between Wilsons Promontory and the north-eastern corner of mainland Tasmania. My vascular plant specimens passed 13 000 in December 2006. However, there are many tens of thousands of hectares of Shining Peppermints, with a major understorey of Whip-stick Teatree, on Flinders Island but very little work seems to have been done in them at the flowering time of the Elbow Orchid. To date this species still remains known in Tasmania by just the

single plant collected in January 1972. So the orchid is appropriately scheduled, under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*, as endangered.

**Extension of the species' range**

The nearest Australian mainland site is near Wonthaggi in Victoria. The Tasmanian locality at Smith's Gully extends the species' range some 210 kilometres to the south-east.

**The Specimen**

3.i.1972, Smith's Gully, Flinders Island, at 0594839, 5550532; 40° 11' 24.5", 148° 06' 50.8" (Datum AGD66; estimated error: 7 metres). John Whinray C2011 & Maureen Christie; CANB 332344.

The current generic name of the Elbow Orchid was assigned by Jones *et al.* (2002).

**Acknowledgements**

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**References**

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**John Whinray**  
 Flinders Island, 7255

**Birds of the Long Forest  
 1889 – 2005**

by Marilyn Hewish, Rosemary Ward, Rohan Bugg  
 and David Munday

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The 'Long Forest' of the title of this book is the Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve, north of the Western Highway between Melton and Bacchus Marsh, and selected areas in its vicinity. This area is unique and important because it contains outliers of Mallee vegetation at least 100 km from the main Victorian distribution and separated by the Great Dividing Range. This wonderful book is a lot more than an annotated list of birds and where to find them. For the past 25 years the authors and birdwatchers from many organisations have studied the bird community of the Long Forest in detail. This area has been a birdwatcher's paradise since the 1880s when the train line was extended to Melton. The book also includes painstakingly researched histori-

cal records of birds in the area and biographies of three early, well-known birdwatchers.

Many years ago my husband and I owned a block of bushland on the Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road. How I wish we still had it. It was very close to Lake Merrimu and the Long Forest and I recall the bitter conservation battle when part of the Long Forest, with its unique Mallee vegetation, was subdivided for large housing blocks. In an act of generosity demonstrating great forethought, Bill Wilson purchased 148 ha in 1977. This was ultimately transferred to the Crown and became the first part of the Long Forest Reserve. The reserve has since been enlarged and, as a small remnant, the Long Forest is a treasure trove of plants and animals. Let's hope that addi-